

fund, this is called the cigarette fund. Now I know that the proper way is to put it in the general fund and then the general fund then distribute the money to the proper places. But the purpose of this bill is to recognize the need of these several things, and if we don't even have any money, I still think the need is there and we should find some money someplace to fund these different projects and that is the problem that I have. So I really have no problem of putting the money where, but the problem is, are we going to get the money? Now as we have been addressing ourselves, we just say we will put it in the general fund and the purpose of the bill is gone. Well, if that is the case, I am not going to support the committee amendments. I mean, I am going to stay and say, here the purpose is and we want that purpose and I want you to recognize that. Thank you.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Chronister, did you wish to speak again, please.

SENATOR CHRONISTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I think Senator Carsten's reference to a gunny sack is great. That, in essence, is what this bill wants to do. We want to get a vehicle in place in the event the federal government does go ahead with their intentions of sunsetting this provision of eight cents on a pack of cigarettes. It is a bill unique in that respect because its implementation relies wholly on the action of the federal government. Now in the event it does occur, I think Nebraska, like our sister state, Kansas, should have a vehicle in place to take advantage of this. I see no reason for anyone to desire cutting the tax on cigarettes, in fact, an increase, I don't think, would be all that bad. But I think it behooves us at this stage of the game to put this vehicle and implement it and get it ready to go in the case it goes. Now as far as earmarking is concerned, this morning we heard references about wedding licenses, birth certificates...thank you, "Gar", that is a different...that is a horse of a different color. We are talking about cigarette tax and it is nothing new in this state to earmark the revenues for cigarette tax to go into certain areas. And I would hope that some of these people who have gotten up before and say, we do not like earmarking, if they would just stop and reconsider the benefits that we are having from earmarking at this time, and I will enlarge on that later. But I would certainly oppose the amendment. Thank you.